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Sheldon, Kenny & Joy
with their collection,
1968-1969

LETTERS FROM JERUSALEM

May 29, 1988

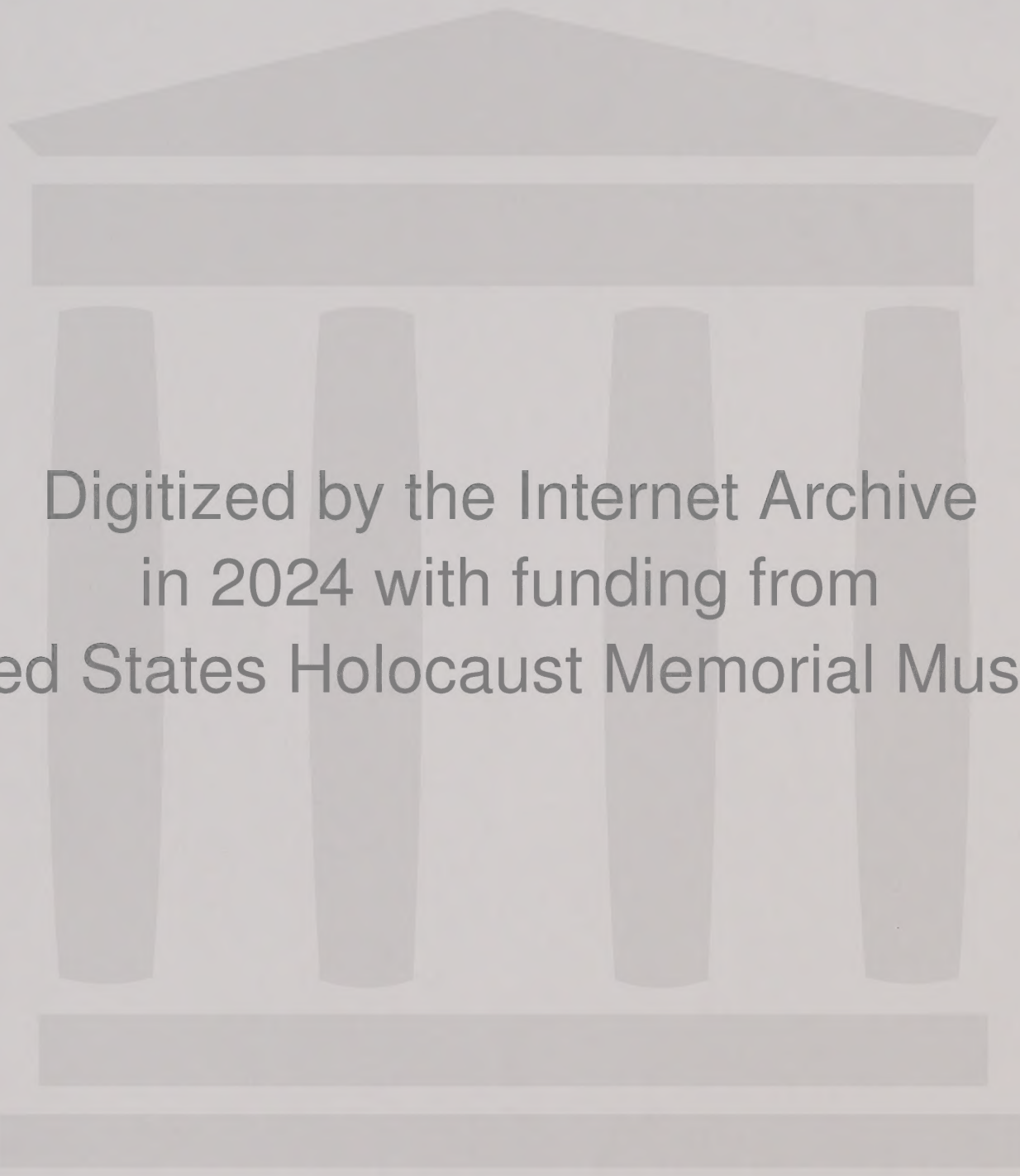
To my children: Sheldon, Kenny & Joy
With love & dedication,
Your Mom

I was born on January 4, 1931, in Paris, at 113 Rue De La Chapelle. Today it is not possible anymore to see the building as it is a main thoroughfare leading to the Charles de Gaulle Airport, outside of Paris. As I lived in that building (up to the age of three or four), I remember how it was like a tall apartment building. We lived on the 3rd or 4th floor in a small two room apartment. My parents were Rose & Henri Rosenfeld. They both originated from Transylvania (Romania), an area which has been common to Hungary and Romania through the years. My parents spoke Hungarian and Yiddish, and of course, French.

At the time I was born, my parents worked for "Lanvin", a world-renowned fashion house where my dad was master-tailor in the Men's Department. This is where he partook in an international coloring competition and won First Prize. The French government said of his French citizenship prior to the competition to make sure that a French man wins the prize, opposed to a foreigner. My dad was a dashing figure of a man. Very colorful personality... ambitious, hard working, compassionate for the masses. He came from a poor struggling middle Europe (Central Europe) background where the Jew was still the underdog and where it was spoken in anti on the coast of Communism as the hope and future of the people -- (You can have an inside on this ideology by seeing the movie "Mother"). Mother also came out of Hungary to France to better her by joining two of her brothers who came out to France a few years before her. She met my dad through the needle trade and married shortly thereafter.

On the floor above us in that first building of my existence lived my dad's best friend, Esther. Esther was also a tailor with a wife and two kids. The daughter of Esther was my best friend, Regine. Regine was two years older than I. More about her later.

To my children, Sheldon Young & Jay
With love & dedication,
Your Mom



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May 29, 1988

I had the thought for quite sometime to put down on paper the events of my life and memories which I find worthwhile to share with you, my children. I feel the time in life is now and so I will proceed in my own way, with my own words, to accomplish this.

I was born on January 4, 1931, in Paris, at 113 Rue De La Chapelle. Today it is not possible anymore to see the building as it is a main thoroughfare leading to the Charles de Gaulle Airport, outside of Paris. As I lived in that building (up to the age of three or four), I remember how it was like a tall apartment building. We lived on the 3rd or 4th floor in a small two room apartment. My parents were Rose & Henri Rozenfeld. They both originated from Transylvania (Roumania), an area which has been common to Hungary and Romania through the years. My parents spoke Hungarian and Yiddish, and of course, French.

At the time I was born, my parents worked for "Lanvin", a world-renown fashion house where my dad was master-tailor in the Men's Department. This is where he partook in an international tailoring competition and won First Prize. The French government sped up his French citizenship prior to the competition to make sure that a French man wins the prize, opposed to a foreigner. My dad was a dashing figure of a man. Very colorful personality... ambitious, hard working, compassionate for the masses. He came from a poor struggling middle Europe (Central Europe) background where the Jew was still the underdog and where it was stylish to trail on the coattail of Communism as the hope and future of the masses - - (You can have an inside to this ideology by seeing the movie: "Reds"). Mother also came out of Hungary to France to better her lot by joining two of her brothers who came out to France a few years before her. She met my dad through the needle trade and married shortly thereafter.

On the floor above us in that first building of my existence lived my dad's best friend, Batiste. Batiste was also a tailor with a wife and two kids. The daughter of Batiste was my best friend, Regine. Regine was two years older than I. More about her later.

Two other events I recall from Rue De La Chapelle: I rolled down the staircase once when I was about two (did not hurt myself), and when I was 2 1/2, my mother gave birth to my brother, Louis-Le'on (Loulou), in a small, private hospital (it was the same female Doctor who had delivered me at home). I recall that I asked my dad to take me to my mom and he did. I remember vividly the room: My mom was in a small bed, next to her was a crib with Loulou in it. Out of the window, I could see the medical staff having lunch outside at a table. (It was summer - July 4, 1933). This, my first address in my life, will have some more significance at the time of the Holocaust.

May 30, 1988

Our next address became 7 Rue Fromentin. This was a larger apartment: 4 rooms. At this stage, my father became self-employed and conducted his business at home. The bedroom was above a night-club (we lived one flight up), and in the evening, lying on my bed, I could hear the rhythm of the base-cello: boom, boom, boom, boom.. It is in this house that I got my first piano. It is in this house that my maternal grandmother came for a visit and taught me the Hebrew alphabet. I was about three when my mom one day, going to shop, for some reason, could not take me with her., I sneaked out of the house and took a stroll by myself. First I visited the Department Store, then got lost and was picked up by the police -- that is where my parents found me --singing and dancing, entertaining a crowd at the police station.

In 1937, when I was six, we moved to the center of Paris in the Madeleine neighborhood. The Madeleine church was walking distance to our new address: 17 Rue Godot de Mauray. This area is close to the Grands Boulevards, the Opera, Place Vendome, and the Champs Elysees. The apartment had six rooms. By now, my father had a well established clientele.

I forgot to mention previously that my dad's brother, my uncle Eugene, was working with my dad since I was born and my uncle spoke to me in Yiddish. Up to the age of 4, I spoke Yiddish and that is why, still today, I understand the language but forgot to speak it.

We spent each year, the month of August, at the seashore at that part of the sea which is facing Great Britain: Berg-plage. The extended family joined us always: my uncle Eugene and his family (he was married now and had a little boy), my uncle Simon (mother's brother) and his wife (they lived in the north of France, in Lille), my uncle Aron, my aunt Miriam and my two cousins, Maurice and Regine, who lived in Nantes (Brittany), on the west coast of France. These were always happy times and fun at the beach, singing and story-telling. My uncle Simon and my dad used to put a white towel on their head and imitate the singing of Arabs... There were boat rides on the Atlantic, picnics, etc.

During one of those summer vacations, 1939, towards the end -- WW. II broke out. I was 8 1/2. I recall the great concern of my parents. We had planned to drive from Paris to Hungary to visit my grandmother, but this never came to be... My father was an officer in the French Army. He was very dashing in the uniform which he made himself in his shop. He mailed us postcards from every place his army outfit took him through France. My uncle Eugene became a prisoner of war in Germany.

As the war progressed, things became more and more difficult for us. First of all, when France was invaded by the Germans, all Jews were in danger. They started by recruiting all Jews who resided in France but did not have French nationality. My aunt Serina and her little boy, Marcel, whose husband Eugene (my uncle) was a prisoner in Germany were taken away to Auschwitz...

The Batiste family, with my best friend Regine, were taken away to Auschwitz.

I went to school with a "yellow star" and the teacher in school was anti-semitic. She made sure to let me know - - All places of entertainment were forbidden to Jews. We had a curfew of 7 p.m., which was difficult on a child in the summer. This is so similar to the situation Anne Frank wrote about. At this point, my father decided that he will leave Paris for the South of France (which was still free of Germans at that time) and abandon all our possessions except the clothes on our back and money which was sewn in little sacks, carried in belts around our waist and around our necks.

In 1942, one evening, we left the apartment and went by subway to the outskirts of Paris. We spent the evening hidden in a small

house, and around midnight, with the lead of a guide, we walked to the railroad, through the tracks and through many tracks to reach a freight train where we were told to hide inside and wait all night until the next morning when this freight train will take us to free France, in the South. (Anne Frank was two years older than I). With just tribulation, doubt and some suspicion that we may wind up at the other end in Germany, but with no other choice, at that point we did enter the freight train and that is where we spent many anxious hours.

As our present life is witness, we did make it to the South of France. We arrived in Dordogne, La Coquille, a small village where our closest friends, the family Veigh, were already residing. Mrs. Veigh came from the same town in Hungary where my dad was raised. The Veighs had a son Marcel, the same age as Loulou, and our two families were very close.

What were the arrangements? We had a room upstairs in a private house for the four of us: dad, mom, my brother & I. Downstairs, we had a kitchen in the garden. The first mail we got was a returned letter from Hungary from my grandmother - no delivery - we knew then that she also had been taken to Auschwitz.

How did we spend our lives for the next three years of the war? After a short time, that part of France was also invaded by the Germans and so was the little village where several Jewish families were in hiding. It was not long before my father joined the French Resistance and was involved in sabotage work. I recall the little room we shared with a desk below the window. On this desk, everyday, the map of Europe was laid out and the march of the Nazis was carefully spotted and discussed at great length. My dad also practiced chiropractic medicine on farmers for exchange of food, etc. The local school had classes for Loulou, for the first two years, but I was already 11 and had to go to school in the next city, Perigueux, where my parents placed me by Catholic nuns at Ursulines (the order), where I spent the next three years, coming home by train for holidays, only. By the nuns, I became Madeleine Rousseau, as the Nazis entered every school and checked the roster for Jewish names.

The last year, Loulou was placed in the same city by Jesuits. We met on Sunday sometimes; I the big girl of 13, he the little boy of 11. I recall one day, we had a few pennies, so we treated ourselves to a

kilo of apples... When I went back home on holidays, mom had all kinds of goodies cooked for me on the wooden stove, by the kitchen - - what a treat it was!

Can you imagine the expenses during three years without income? Both our schools, food, clothing for growing children? For my birthday, I recall I got a pair of brown leather shoes.. I cherished them-- These were the years when I developed from a child to a young woman, and in a sense, these years can be compared to those described in Anne Frank's writings.

In the village of La Coquille, were many boys and girls of our age. In the summer, we went to a small river where a "make-shift" beach was set up with pebbles, stones -- We spent many hours there-- parents, boys and girls. I learned there what "romance" was about; the singing, the flirtation, going to pick berries, and most of all, bicycle riding. Mom sent me to the farms to buy eggs. We went to pick cherries..

In Perigueux, lived a Jewish family also in hiding. They were distant relatives of friends of my parents. They had a son who took fancy to me. He took me to the movies. I was almost 14. We sat cheek to cheek--

It is amazing -- when I started to write these letters, I did not know really what I will write in detail. But, words are just pouring out of my pen. It is easy when you know the subject..

The description of events and places is not sufficient to really express how my childhood was. There was a great amount of care, love and tenderness from my parents. Also, strength, wisdom and common sense. I recall one scene in the kitchen of our "home" in La Coquille. My dad with me on his knees, singing to me a song in Yiddish: "Kinder Yuren" - childhood years. In the garden, a German soldier was walking, coming closer to the house. I was scared and my father kept on singing, louder and louder. The soldier walked away.

I mentioned before that my dad was involved in the French Resistance, doing sabotage work, specifically on railroads. When I was coming home from Perigueux to La Coquille, by train, the train slowed down at an intersection close to La Coquille. On the tracks

were resistance men getting ready to blow up tracks when my dad noticed me sitting at the window on the train..

Being at school by nuns, of course, I was totally immersed in the Catholic scene with mass every morning and religious instruction. However, I did not forget who I was or where I came from. It was not an easy task for a young girl who could have been attracted to the mysticism of Christianity. My parents had many mixed emotions when they came to see me perform in a play, personifying an angel. At night, when I laid in bed in the dormitory, my thoughts went to my parents, wishing they will live for ever and ever.

June 14, 1988

Mom came to visit me sometimes on a Thursday afternoon. That was the day when French children are out of school. I recall how pretty she was with a turban hat. She was in her early 40's then, all love, all caring. I used to write her beautiful letters, acknowledging all the sacrifices she and my dad were going through for my brother and I so that we could have a half-decent education in these trying times. We felt so close – we cared so much..

One day, in May 1945, I got a telephone call from my mom saying our cousins had arrived. I knew what that meant: The allies landed in Normandy!! For awhile longer, I had to stay by the nuns until France was totally liberated by the allies and we would be able, as a family, to again return to Paris. I'll never forget the spirit of patriotism when on the main square of the city of Perijoux I saw Charles de Gaulle make a resounding speech to the people assembled. France was free at last from the Nazi occupation and we had remained alive! It was also the end of my childhood. I was 14 1/2 when the war ended.

We got back to Paris where my parents started from the beginning to build up again a life for us. These were the years when we were faced with the unbelievable remains of the Holocaust. Tales of horror were recounted in book after book and by the survivors. I met young girls with marks all over their legs from the experimental tests done on them. I wept for my people, for my relatives, for my friends who never returned. One day, on a list, my parents found the name of my mom's younger sister. She had survived Auschwitz. She was in Bergen-Belsen, Germany in a D.P. (Displaced Persons) Camp. Immediately, my parents got to it and had her transferred to Paris, to our home. She came to us with pictures from Germany;

friends from home she had also found in Bergen-Belsen. She showed us pictures from the Nuszens: Helen and Judy, Alex and Bela. She knew them from back home in Hungary. These were exciting years of renewal of life, of hope and future. American G.I.'s all over Paris!! My parents got back on their feet, financially. I resumed my piano lessons and school, of course. We went to the theater, the opera, shows, movies, dances.

My first boyfriend was Daniel. My second boyfriend was Max. I was nineteen now. Max & I broke off. I was heart broken so my parents took me for the weekend at the seashore, Deauville. My aunt Hindu (mom's sister who survived) came along with us. We visited the casino and that is where, that weekend, a young man visiting from Sweden recognized my aunt Hindu. This young man is your dad my children: Bela Nussen.

After the preliminary shock, my aunt introduced my parents to this young man who was in the company of a Swedish woman, and my parents invited them to visit us in Paris on their way back to Sweden. I recall that the next day we passed by a kosher restaurant and this young man was in the restaurant with this Swedish woman, having a meal. He wore a beige sportshirt with a colorful necktie. I remember it like it would have been today. This was 38 years ago.. They did visit us in Paris. It was in the evening. Mom put a beautiful green and white tablecloth on the table. I still have this tablecloth and I cherish it.

The young man came with the Swedish woman. He asked to wash his hands. I liked that. Your dad still washes his hands at all occasions. It is so proper -- so nice. After talks back and forth between my aunt and this young man, my aunt told us that he had been a child protégé in Europe with quite a reputation. We all asked him to sing and my dad asked me to accompany him, which I did. I liked his voice, I liked his manners. He asked me for the next day to take him and his lady to a restaurant. I did that. There, he asked me to read the menu for him and pick him some fish dish. I did. I liked that: this fellow had imagination! They returned to Sweden and we received a thank-you letter for the evening.

My dad had an accident. One day, my parents came back from an outing and my dad got a stroke. It impaired the usage of a hand, but with supreme effort on his part, he worked at it and got back the

use of his hand. Unfortunately, the diagnosis was that he was developing hardening of the arteries.

June 27, 1988

There are so many rich memories from this period of my life that I do want to convey to you... Let us talk first about my dad. After he left his hometown, he went to Budapest where he worked in his trade. He continued to France, then took a ship to Cuba where he wanted to find his fortune. He could not take the heat, so he came back to France. I recall seeing a picture of him in Cuba, all dressed up for the photographer. He was very young then- eighteen or so. He was a family man and a leader, talented in his profession. He had a very sophisticated clientele: Rothschilds, judges, physicians, attorneys. He had a great sense of humor and loved practical jokes. He loved to read, in particular about the sea, and the creatures of the sea. He loved the cinema, particularly "Westerns." Sport? His favorite was wrestling. Dad was an expert photographer. He developed his own film. He was quite a chess player too. He loved people and was a compassionate man. For my dad to bring home a beggar to sit at our table for dinner was very matter-of-fact. We also had a sleep-in-maid since I was a child. He loved music --classical, opera, "hazzanut." My dad and mom both sang very well in Yiddish, Hungarian and French songs. Our home had people coming and going all day long. The radio was going also all day long, along with my piano practice. I was expected to play for dad's clients and also when a connoisseur was present. There were professional musicians among the clients and artists of all sorts. I was exposed to a life teaching me a lot about human interaction, marriage, love affairs, shady characters, etc. But along with this, my father was very strict with me and my brother.

My mom worked with my dad. She was also a marvelous cook. She was much more realistic than my dad when it came to business and finance. My dad had a big temper, my mom was the balancing force in the marriage. Religion: before the Holocaust, no participation in religious service but strong participation and ties to the Jewish people. I recall when I was about six years old, the maid took me on a trip through Paris on a Thursday afternoon, and she took me to visit the "Sacre Coeur" - a church landmark in Paris. Upon returning home, I told my dad about it. He was furious - how dare she take me inside a church when I was Jewish! After the Holocaust, we attended services for the High Holidays at a synagogue (Hungarians), where my dad was on the board.

I was not allowed to date non-Jewish fellows! When we returned to Paris, after the Holocaust, my parents were involved in all kinds of activities helping the survivors. One of them was a home for orphans, outside Paris, and that is where my dad met Hollander (Perry's father-in-law).

We attended giant Zionist meetings for Israel. My dad sent his arms (from the resistance) to Israel for our people to fight for its land... I belonged to a Zionist Youth Group and had the opportunity when I attended socials to meet young men who were on their way to Israel to fight. I had two girl friends: Michelle and Jocelyne. My uncle Eugene came back from Germany where he had been a prisoner of war. After a couple of years, after working with my dad, he remarried and worked on his own. My dad had many people working with him: a half-dozen at all times, including mom, cousins, friends, etc.

The young man from Sweden wrote again and suggested to have a correspondence with him: I writing to him in French, he writing to me in Hungarian. It sounded interesting, so we got to it. This was 1950, I was nineteen.

I loved my parents but I wanted already to have a life of my own, a home of my own, my own ways of doing things. Life at home got a bit crowded. My cousin, Regine, came to be with us also as she was trying her luck in the theater in Paris. My aunt Hindu by now was also married and lived with her husband in Paris.

Bela Nussen came to Paris in January, 1951. He came through the door with great flair: a bouquet of flowers in one hand, a recording of Doris Day in the other. The title of the record was: "At the Cafe Rendez-Vous." This recording by Doris Day was her interpretation of a young lady in Paris.

Bela Nussen was very nervous that day. He had close shaven his face and cut himself. It was very cute and romantic and unique..

My dad had been sick and was in bed and Bela went and sat next to his bed and had long conversations with him about Bela's sister, Helen, who was in Sweden and gave him great anxiety and problems. Your dad wasn't like any of the fellows I had dated. He was different, he was older and seemed to carry the world on his

shoulders. He also showed great concern about everything, an intensity of life which commanded caring, tenderness from anyone wanting to be involved with him.

My mom cared a lot about my dad; their life was intermingled. I knew of nothing else but the idea of "mate for life." Bela and I went out for two weeks. We wandered around Paris, Versailles, museums, opera (Samson & Delilah); we went to formal dances. At one of these formal dances, at the hotel George V, Bela told me that his mom, upon visiting him in Budapest, told him that he will never find a wife as he is too neat, too particular. What a challenge! We went out to eat, we spoke in Hungarian.

One day, at a restaurant, Bela said: "Would you come with me to the United States?" This was his proposal. I answered: "You better talk to my dad." As he took me home, inside the door of the building, he gave me a very sexy kiss... My parents made us a very beautiful engagement party at our home - the house was full of flowers.

It was February 1951. Your dad went back to Sweden as he had to make quite a lot of arrangements regarding Helen and his own life. He then went from Sweden to the U.S. to find his luck.

Education

I went through elementary school in Paris, junior high and part of senior high by the nuns during the war. Certain subjects in school were screwed up during the war when the Germans invaded France. The curriculum in high school was changed several times and, accordingly, messed up the program of some kids. I was one of them. Physics, Chemistry & Geometry were three subjects I did not receive and, consequently, when we came back to Paris after the Holocaust, instead of attending public school, I attended a private school.

My goal was to be a doctor or a concert pianist. I chose the latter and had to attend to a very rigorous program to achieve my goal. It meant a minimum of 3-4 hours practice per day plus all the related courses in theory, harmony, etc. For this, I was enrolled in a music school (Ecole Normale de Musique) and had a private teacher in piano and one in music theory. After awhile, it became impossible to attend high school and music school. I dropped out of high school my senior year and had private tutoring at home in English and other subjects.

After I became engaged and knowing that I will leave France, the six months between our engagement and the wedding were spent in preparation. Also, another tragedy came about - my mom became violently ill and went through an operation where her kidney was removed. I was with her at the hospital. I recall the despair of my father. He was totally lost... Also, Bela tried for Helen to immigrate to the U.S. through France, so she stood by us for a while but the project was a failure.

Madame Veigh (the Veighs were my parents best friends) did all the arrangements for our wedding. Mom was still very weak a couple weeks before the wedding. We had the civil ceremony at the courthouse, followed the next day by the religious ceremony, performed by an Orthodox rabbi in a hall. The wedding was followed by a cocktail party and sit-down dinner with Hungarian gypsy music. Family and friends were there, of course, but your dad was alone with no one from his side; family or friend. My parents were very emotional, Madame Veigh melancholic, knowing that I was leaving everyone. It was July 29, 1951.

Bela & I left for our honeymoon - the French Riviera, followed by a visit to Sweden to Helen. I realized the first week of my marriage that I became pregnant and this was confirmed by our family physician who examined me upon our return to Paris. Great trunks were prepared for our trip overseas; one uncle and aunt gave us two large leather armchairs. The rest were linen, silverware, personal belongings, etc. One morning, very early, we left by car, all of us, towards the coastline where we were going to board a ship: "The Isle de France." The last picture in my heart remains my dad showing me from far away as we stood on the ship, showing me, signaling me to write -- to write -- to write. After our departure, my dad's health deteriorated considerably...

The trip across the Atlantic was an ordeal for me. I was in the first month of pregnancy and could not hold down any food. It was also very hot in the cabin and not knowing in advance about such things, I was not dressed comfortably, etc.

We arrived in New York Harbor on September 13, 1951. It was extremely hot and I was dressed in a suit (wanting to be very proper and presentable to meet Bela's family). What did I know of New York's weather? September in France is fall already and cool weather.

June 29, 1988

Here I was, pregnant and married at the age of 20, my "mate for life", 30, at my side, on the deck of the Isle de France. When I saw at a distance the Statue of Liberty, the gift of my country to the USA, my heart swelled with pride. Yes, this will be our future --our life together. I will do everything to be a good wife, make a nice home for my man, be a good mother for our child. America, here I come!

June 30, 1988

1660 East 13th Street Brooklyn, New York. This is the address we were driven to upon our arrival by four smiling faces: Alex, Freida, Sidney & Judy.

September 13, 1951 - 1956. Many events happened during these first five years in the USA. The first six months, up to March 29, the birth of our first son, I learned to become an American, a housewife, a member of the Nussen family. I was very young, very inexperienced, and very far from my origins. But, I learned to adjust to compromise, to accept what was present. Somehow, I made it.

July 12, 1988

During this first period of our married life, Bela worked in different laboratories in Manhattan before finally opening his own lab in the Time and Life Building in Rockefeller Center. He also took in a partner, Sy, and the lab was called: Sybell. Sy's wife was a bookkeeper and that is how I learned about billing, bookkeeping, checks, etc. This is also the period when I learned to type and drive a car. I was in touch with my parents and in 1952, when Sheldon was 8 months old, mom sent me airline tickets to come with Sheldon to Paris, to see my dad, who was very ill. With great apprehension, I made the trip. I was only 21 years old, with the responsibility of this trip with an 8-month old baby.

Mom and the "Veighs" picked us up from the airport. I was told that my dad had a 2nd stroke and this time it was really bad. His heart was enlarged and there was not much hope of improvement. I found my dad in bed, greatly aged but he was able to communicate with me. He was happy that I had come with my son and wanted to know all about my "Jewish life" in the states. It was winter and

there was snow in Paris. Mom did everything to make my stay comfortable with Sheldon. We were there about 3 weeks. Madame Veigh invited Sheldon & I for lunch. Mom babysitted that I may go to the movies with my cousin Regine to see the last movie by Charlie Chaplin - "Limelight." When time came for us to return to the States, dad asked me to play the piano for him; in particular, a piece of Chopin entitled: "All is Over." I understood – the good-bye was painful, knowing that it was the last time we would see each other. I was told later on that when I left, dad tried to walk to the window to see us go. Exactly one year later (November '53) at the age of 54, my dad passed away. I was told through a letter sent to me by my brother Lou.

I "sat" Shiva for my father when I got the letter. Part of my life had ended.

Sometime between 1953 and 1956 my brother Lou came to the States. He stood by us for a while before going to live on his own in Brooklyn, close to Pratt Institute, where he was involved taking courses in Architecture. A couple times, he brought over some girls to introduce them to me. He was a bachelor, a young fellow, and slowly he estranged himself from my environment.

Bela and I spent a lot of time with his family. Judy & Sidney lived a few minutes from us. Alex & Frieda were also in Brooklyn. I really did not have too much time for myself, and from this vantage point, looking back, I think that I was going through the emotions of living one hour after the other, one day at a time, one month following the next... I was immersed into a foreign "soup" and had to swim upstream the best I could. The spiritual and intellectual setting of my life was not at all what I was accustomed to. Bela knew that and he tried his best but was caught between the new awakening of having found his family again after so many years of separation, and this new bride with a crying baby.. this new bride who was a bit foreign to him.

But slowly but surely, I found my niche. We had a beautiful, lively boy who explored every recess of the apartment. Our Sheldon – a "real boy" (named after "Shloime", Bela's oldest brother who died in a fire in Russia). 1955. We were blessed with a second boy: Kenneth Henry, named after my father. When I came home from the hospital, Sheldon said: Thank you Mommy, for my new baby brother. Baby brother Kenny had the most gorgeous eye lashes and

he smiled all the time. Sidney named him "rubber face." Kenny could sit all day in the play pen and in the carriage and play with his toys and smile. After the busy, busy Sheldon, it was a welcome relief.

Sheldon and Kenny adored each other. There was never any sign of jealousy or competition. Sheldon guarded Kenny with his life and protected him. Next door to us lived the Swickle family. They had a boy a bit older than Sheldon. Downstairs was an Italian family with a son, Vicky, about Sheldon's age. There were many children in the neighborhood and by 1955, 1956, Sheldon played downstairs in the backyard of the building with many other children. Mom, a widow, left France and was with us for awhile before setting up house with Lou. Through the Dental Technician's Association, we met the Kleins and the Howards. The Kleins had three daughters and lived in Flushing. We visited each other with the children. Bela made a trip to California and loved it very much. Because of his family, we did not move there.

By 1956, the apartment got too small with two growing boys. We looked for an alternative; a home or a larger apartment. We settled for an apartment in Kew Gardens, just over the Van Wyck Express. This was quite an improvement; better neighborhood, Queens, a high-rise building with a play park in front of it. We were on the 5th floor. This time, we had an entrance to a large living room, dining area, kitchen, another foyer from where you entered two bedrooms, a bath, and the boys had their own w.c. My interior decorator (Bela) fixed up the place beautifully. Wall-to-wall carpeting, a combination room-divider, fish tank, a t.v. that hit the eye when one entered the place. I recall in the bedroom, two hanging lights above the night table. On our floor, a family with two girls, one of them, Tonie, revealed to Sheldon - sometime between those three years we lived there - the difference between the sexes. Next to the elevator, lived with his family, a t.v. writer.

These are the years when I drove for the first time by myself into Manhattan. I became involved in "organization" life with Hadassah and was the accompanist and music arranger for the show "Carmen Shapiro", a take off, "a la Jewish", from the opera, Carmen. Some of the people involved in this show became my friends: Mildred and Felice. Felice is the cousin of Tony Curtis. We also discovered that Felice's parents owned a soda-fountain shop on King's Highway close-by where we used to live in Brooklyn, and that Bela purchased

from them his first juice maker (orange-squeezer). Some people from the cast were very well to do with estate-homes in the selective neighborhood and some of our rehearsals took place there. We also took rides with the cast to upstate New York, Scarsdale, etc.. In those years, Scarsdale was the Beverly Hills of New York.

Bela bought a boat in partnership with a friend and he kept the boat anchored somewhere in Long Island. They went fishing together. Our two boys, Sheldon & Kenny, played astronauts in their bathroom by putting on the fan for "take off". Sheldon went to ballet school with Muriel and Felice's sons. He danced tap on the tune of "I got the bunny rabbit blues since I have my dancing shoes." He had on rabbit ears. He was adorable.

August 10, 1988

Queens, and in particular, where we lived, was a very nice neighborhood. Bela was doing fine with his lab at Rockefeller Center but it had its limitations and the growth potential wasn't there. Bela had gone to California to explore the West when we still lived on E. 13th St. and I was pregnant with Kenny. He had been very enthusiastic and found immediately many opportunities for us but upon his return, his family had objected to our moving. They claimed that our move would break up the family ties and so we stood on the East Coast. By the time we lived in Queens, once again Bela had to look to better our life. His many contacts in the dental field, and in particular, the "Vitallium" Co. who knew him from Sweden suggested that he look into an opportunity in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. One winter day, he flew down. The opportunity was not for him, however he was totally overtaken by the warm climate and made some contact with Miami & Palm Beach areas.

I lost my best friend, Claire. Mom had remarried by now to Ben and we left Kenny with them. Bela, Sheldon & I went down together in the summer to see what Florida was about. I remember Sheldon drinking for the first time the soda called "root beer" - he loved it! After our decision was made in 1959, our little family moved down to Florida with the boat, the dental equipment and all. We stood first on Venetian Causeway in a furnished apartment. That is where Sheldon learned to dive and swim from one day to the next; where Kenny opened his forehead on the night table and we rushed him to the hospital in the middle of the night. Dad had a job in a lab in

Miami but shortly thereafter, the lab closed down and we established ourselves in the Palm Beach area.

Maddock Street. We had a school in back of us. When Sheldon was cutting the lawn one day, he cut his finger. He was quite brave. I grabbed him, took him by car to the doctor, who sewed up his finger. All was well.. Dad opened up the very first dental lab in Palm Beach. He specialized in gold work - crowns and precision attachments. I joined immediately, B'nai Brith and Hadassah. We had a wonderful community with lots of people of our own age, children, professional people. After a couple years, we purchased the house in Lake Clarke Shores. Things were changing in the dental field. Porcelain came on the scene. Dad was working with acrylic and "pyro-plast" from "Williams." It was difficult for him to switch but he had great will power and he taught himself to work with porcelain. We had a big social life by then. Dad & I were involved in the community - UJA, etc.. We were members of the Reform Synagogue and very busy with Sisterhood, Men's Club, all the activities.

In 1962, came to the scene our little princess, Joy - the sunshine of our life for Bela, myself, Sheldon & Kenny. She was showered with love, attention and gifts. The closet of her room was filled, wall- to -wall, with dresses. I recall, in particular, a red night gown with a red negligee --for a baby? Our lives turned around. Dad was hired on the spot as Hazzan of the Reform Synagogue when he sang the Kiddush for Joy's baby naming.

August 25, 1988

I want to pause for a moment with the chronological order and speak about my mom and your dad's background. Your dad was born in Czechoslovakia in a small place, and his family moved to Hungary (Romania), when he was still an infant. From this place, they found their way, eventually, to Satu-Mare, Romania. My mother was born in Satu-Mare. Her dad worked at the courthouse there and died fairly young, leaving my grandmother a widow with six children: my mom, my aunt Hindu (who came to us in Paris after the holocaust), my aunt Serena, who married and lived in Algier, Algeria, North Africa, and passed away during the war (W.W.II); another aunt who married and lived in Romania and went to Auschwitz, my uncle Aron, who lived in Nantes, France and passed away in the '70's, and my uncle Simon who passed away in Nice, France also in the '70's. Do you remember talking about Bela's

best friend, Fried Yoska? Well, my mom was friends with his mother. Bela's family lived next door to my grandmother in Satu-Mare.

Bela was a child protégé when he was very young and had a most promising career ahead of him. He toured all over Central Europe with his dad and sang in many places through Hungary and Romania. At the time when his voice changed, he went through a tremendous trauma as his father did not understand this process. He ran away from Yeshiva but eventually got back to Satu-Mare, where he undertook to learn a profession and went into apprenticeship by a dentist in Satu-Mare. From there, he went to Budapest and at the age of 20, went into the Hungarian army from where he wound up in Yugoslavia, in labor camp, in a copper mine. He was somewhat of a hero as he worked himself up from the copper mine into dental service from camp to camp, and provided extra food for the inmates. He escaped from this hell to Tito (the gorilla partisans), and from there, after the war, through the mountains, back to Hungary, to see who remained alive. He discovered in Bergen-Belsen, Germany, Uncle Yassi, Uncle Alex, Judy & Helen. The burden was placed on his shoulders to accompany Helen to Sweden for brain-surgery. He lived in Sweden from 1945-1951, the years when he came to France on vacation and we met, and married.

Back to 1962. We are in Lake Clarke Shores. Bela is 41 years old, I am 31, Sheldon 10, Kenny 7 and Joy just born. We have a very nice family life. Eventually, our religious experience at the Reform Synagogue is less than adequate. A new Conservative Synagogue is started and your dad becomes the Hazzan. I directed the Children's Choir.. Meanwhile, Sheldon's religious education needs to be enriched so we make provisions to have him at the Hebrew Academy in Miami Beach - 1963. The arrangements are that I drive him there on Monday morning, he stays by a family (the Sukenicks) for the week, and I pick him up on Friday to bring him home for the weekend. One day, as I drove from West Palm to Miami, as I approached the toll booth, I heard on the radio about the assassination of John F. Kennedy. We all spent that weekend glued to the t.v. with tears running down our faces. - November 22, 1963. 1965, Sheldon's Bar Mitzvah. The whole community was present at the synagogue. Sheldon "davened" the whole service. It was wonderful. He was so overwhelmed that when we got home he started to cry.. We had a big party at the house.

Dad's business encountered difficulties. The volume of work was not up to par. First he tried cutting down the load of expenses by moving to a smaller place in West Palm Beach proper, out of Palm Beach. It was the time when he attempted to develop porcelain work instead of acrylic. The Kleins came down to give him encouragement on his new opening in West Palm Beach. During all the years, I did not actually do technical work but the paperwork was always left for me to deal with. The Biblins were our close friends. We shared throwing a big party at our house with lots of people coming to us by boat, on horses and by car. The theme was Israel. Bela got some driftwood on the beach which he placed in the middle of the patio and decorated it with road signs of Israel's main cities. Each table had the name of one of the 12 tribes. We had one room for the bar with a barman serving, loads of food, music. It was also the times when all the Nussens came to us for Pesach. Business needed expansion. It was not possible in West Palm Beach. One of the large labs from New Jersey had one of their owners retiring in Florida and this person had a son: Mel Simkins. The father asked Bela to go in partnership with him in Miami Beach. Meanwhile, a Cantorial position was offered to Bela at the Israelite Center in Miami. For Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I packed my pots and pans and we went, all five of us, to a motel walking distance from the Israelite Center. We walked to services with raincoats as it was pouring cats and dogs.. We looked around for a place to live and we all liked very much the Morton Towers. It was very expensive and we could afford only an apartment with two bedrooms so all three of you were stuck with each other in one room. But...there were other advantages: the pool, the beautiful scenery, all three of you in private school (Sheldon and Kenny at the Hebrew Academy, Joy at the Solomon Schechter Day School where I eventually taught Music). You had many friends around: the Seifs, the Adlers, the Breehs, the Raabs and school friends.

Dad worked very hard at the new lab on Lincoln Road. It was a large lab which required capital for expansion. Dad worked all kinds of hours but Mel Simkins didn't. His father kept on pouring money into the business and dad took a small business loan from the government. They were going no place.

In 1967, we had the opportunity to come to Israel, dad & I and we left you at home, all three of you, to take care of each other. Sheldon - 15, Kenny - 12 and Joy -5. My mom was at that time living in Miami Beach and was very sick.

1968 - Kenny's Bar-Mitzvah. In the morning I went to the hospital to pick up mom to bring her to the synagogue. The Bar-Mitzvah was beautiful; Kenny doing the whole service. The Rabbi's speech was very touching.

October 8, 1988
8:20 a.m.

It has been now 6 months that I started this project and it is time to pause with a few reflections. My darling children, this is a project of love that I am offering to you. Love is the most important element in our existence. I have intentionally kept out of this project all negative thoughts or negative events and will continue to do so if possible. The purpose is to convey to you the events of our lives in a positive fashion and without judgmental opinion. What you will derive of this is up to each of you individually. Your own life is in your hands.

Now going back to 1968 and Kenny's Bar-Mitzvah. By then, The Israelite Center had been closed due to changes in the neighborhood and Bela became associated with Rabbi Swersky. The speech at the Bar-Mitzvah was very emotionally impacting as Rabbi Swersky mentioned the past of our families, including the Holocaust. Grandma wept; so did I. But there were going to be much more tears shed when my mom left us on the second night of Succoth.

Some emotional memories from Miami Beach: I went to a doctor for a check-up and the same doctor had examined Sheldon a few days before. His comment was: your son has the most beautiful heart and soul. Yes, darling Sheldon... Concert, on Pesach, at a hotel: Sheldon singing "The Impossible Dream"... Kenny running for elections at the Junior High... the speech, the billboard.. Joy dancing at a celebration at the Solomon Schechter School as a "machberet" - a notebook. These three memories are banked as a deposit in my heart, not to be withdrawn, only for joy and happiness giving.

1969. Ten years in Florida -- we were on our way back to New York. Dad went first after selling his share to Mel Simkins, having received the offer by Bernie Weissman to run his lab in Brooklyn. I found a

job at a bank on Lincoln Road, but not for very long, as dad gave us the o.k. to come up to New York. Remember it all? The moving, the driving up without stopping overnight, Sheldon & I sharing the driving. Dad was flabbergasted when we showed up at the door early in the morning in Lynbrook... I know these were difficult times for you with school in Lynbrook. There were problems to be overcome but there was no choice but to forge ahead and make it.

I got a job in a "Factors" Company and did well at it. We moved to a house in Hewlett. I recall the day when dad surprised you by showing you the pool. It was not easy either for your dad. Bernie Weissman sold his company to a conglomerate and dad had to look for another job. He found one in Mount Vernon, running a very large lab. All these things were made possible due to his connections in the dental lab field (Gil Brown). There were several High Holiday positions through those years.. Catskills, Brooklyn.. I also, for an additional job, started teaching music at a synagogue in Cedarhurst. This, by the way, is the synagogue where years later, cousin Paul got married. I also fulfilled an ambition I had for years, and that was to finish up and get a High School Equivalency in the states - I did this at Hewlett High. My grades were so high that I was told that I will not have any problem entering a university.

Meanwhile, the plot thickens. Your cousins, Perry & Sheila, started attending a Yeshiva in Rockaway and came to live with us. I believe it was a good experience for all concerned.

1971. I was forty and pregnant and undecided about what to do. I was four 1/2 months . Decided on an abortion, which was illegal in the states. Bernie Weissman put me in contact with someone in Manhattan who arranges such affairs in England. I went to see this person. He was a clergyman at a church. After a stupid kind of conversation, he put me in contact with a doctor in England where I was supposed to go for a weekend. Dad and I went ... and it was done. Upon our return, we went to Aruba for a short vacation.

Dad also wanted to fulfill his dreams... and that was to be in California with all of us. After a trip to Hawaii and the west coast, dad showed me what it was all about: new, new, new; with opportunities and sunshine --- the things he wanted before but chose to compromise (by being in Florida) because of the distance, because of his family. The move for you, Sheldon & Kenny, was not to be so easy. I believe that Sheldon had, then, some of the hardest

times. As far as you, Kenny, maybe it was a time of self-development, as you became part of a different type of family. Joy, you loved it! You had our entire attention, all to yourself.

1972. Corona Del Mar. Beautiful, new, quiet, fresh, near the sea. Business? Bela got screwed up. What to do? What to do? The lab in which dad was going to be in partnership went down the drain. We went into Long Beach and looked around. Dad got a part-time teaching job at Blair College on Atlantic Avenue. We went to services and met the Kanes. Joy, you were doing well at school in Corona Del Mar; especially in Spelling. 10 years old. So sweet...

We got out of our rental contract in Corona Del Mar and rented the house from the Kanes on Gardenia. After fixing up the house (all credit to Bela and his vision and taste), I insisted on buying the house from the Kanes, which we were able to achieve quite nicely. Sheldon and you, Kenny, went on your own. By then, Joy was the only one in our home. After a few unimportant positions in L.A., Bela got a job in Fullerton, bought a lab out there, moved the lab into the house, got a lab in Westwood, sold the lab. These events took place between 1972-1983. They were difficult years. Your father worked hard and tried his best. You must know from life, by now, that trying your best does not always assure success. There were, during those years, Cantorial positions, full and part-time, in Portland, Oregon, Las Vegas, Nevada, Leisure World, Beverly Wilshire Hotel, B'nai Tikvah. There was recognition for your father's fine work in both his professions.

No judgment will be made, no comment on life's ups and downs; just remember that frustration breeds anger and there is just so much anyone can bear...

In 1973, I decided to go back to school, but not to the expense of my family, as far as finance or time. Joy was 11; not a baby anymore. I started Long Beach City College, in the Music Department, and worked there as a secretary. I continued my responsibilities to the "paperwork" for the lab and to my housekeeping. From LBCC, I went to LB state with a double major in Music & French. I worked in the Music library and later, after I received the B.A. in Music and M.A. in French, I taught French for two semesters. It was not easy, but I cherish those years. When dad got the lab in Westwood, I dropped the university. To be closer to Joy at UCLA, to be closer to the lab, we rented the house for one year. Also, dad had promises of a cantorial position with Rabbi Meron, which only materialized

for the High Holidays. As far as the lab goes, there was hardly anything. During that year, I taught Music by Rabbi Meron's synagogue and school. After one year, we went back to our home in Long Beach.

1972-1983

These were the years when you got engaged, Sheldon, then married. You lived close by but were so far away --- my son --- I love you so --- then, Elisa was born. These were the years when you got engaged, Kenny, then married. Where did the years go? My son --- I love you so --- then, Daniel was born. These were the years when you got engaged, Joy, then married - Oh! My daughter, my daughter --- I love you so ---

In 1982, besides the ten, twelve piano students I had, I got a job as an office manager by an Israeli firm in Downey. By 1983, when they acquired a computer, I got some basic knowledge of it and did my work with the computer. The house was for sale and dad and I had hard times. Dad, by now, was out of his position at B'nai Tikvah and out of the lab, which he sold to a firm from Washington state (who disappeared with the money they owed dad). Dad was home alone with nothing to do but pack and pack. I was working. The house was on the market for a long time. We were getting ready to make aliyah to Israel but the house was not sold yet. Finally, we did sell it.

The movers came and took away what we were taking with us. We slept on the floor for a few days with nothing around us, waiting for the money from the house and the plane to go. We sold the house, we sold the car, we went to the bank in L.A. and left 3 envelopes for our 3 children. On the last day, in January 1984, the Laslos said good-bye to us and cried. We spent the last night at the motel near the airport in Long Beach and the next morning, early, the airport bus took us to L.A.X. Dad and I held hands in the bus, crying, saying good-bye to our children in our heart and in our mind...

January 24, 1984. We arrived at Ben Gurion Airport in Israel. In a special reception hall, we are received among other "olim" (immigrants). There is a table with coffee, cookies, etc.. We must proceed now to get our identification booklet as olim and make arrangements to go to our "merkoz klitah" (absorption center). It is late at night and I have a cold. Finally, we are put with our luggage in a taxi and taken to what seems the end of the world. Even the taxi driver does not know where this place is. We finally arrive at

our destination. It is late, it is cold and we are tired. We shlepped up the luggage to the third floor where we were assigned a small place - one room, kitchenette and bathroom. Next day, in the rain, on a muddy dirt road, we walked to the next village to buy food for breakfast. We finally got a gas heater in the room. We also started the "ulpan" the next day, studying Hebrew from "scratch." I made our first Shabbat meal: fish, soup, chicken, etc. After a week or so, dad said: "This is it. I've had it. I'm going to Natanya to see what I can do." He did go to Natanya, to the office of AACI (Association of Americans & Canadians in Israel), where they gave him a big welcome, as they were looking for us all over. They were supposed to have settled us in Natanya, at the absorption center there. Anyway, after 5 weeks, we moved into a beautiful apartment in Natanya and went to the ulpan in the city.

Pesach came very fast and I prepared everything for us, Alex's family and Helen's family. June came with the tragedy of Helen's passing away. Overnight, dad had to make arrangements to go to Sweden, where he met uncle Alex, and they brought back the coffin to be buried in Israel. Aunt Judy and Peter came. Everyone stood by us and all decided to sit shivah by us. I prepared and served everyone.

July came and I suffered a very deep depression -- A very personal problem which is better forgotten. It took me four years to deal with this problem, which was the greatest pain I have suffered in my life. Today, I am a stronger and better person through this suffering (that is when I developed high blood pressure).

Dad was the Hazzan at the very first High Holidays at the King Solomon Hotel in Eilat. We were treated like royalty. Dad also started working in his field, in Natanya. He had corresponded through Alpha Omega, with dentists in Israel, and he had contacts. In November, we got a car and a t.v. Meanwhile, our funds were dwindling. There was rent to be paid a year in advance, appliances and furniture to purchase and food, etc. After a year and 1/2, we moved to Jerusalem because of climate, surroundings and people. I was teaching piano in Natanya to a family - father, mother and daughter (Americans). When I told them that we were moving, the daughter cried.

1985 - Jerusalem.

Beautiful apartment, facing the Knesset. We hurried to settle ourselves because the High Holidays are not far. Dad goes to Germany (Frankfurt) for the High Holidays (they hired him the year before when he davened on Simchat Torah when he was there to buy the car). Now our life starts in Jerusalem. Dad has great contacts with Hadassah Dental School. I advertise and get a few students. Jerusalem is fascinating and we love to walk its streets.

1986 Pesach at the Moriah Hotel by the Dead Sea. We surely miss you.

1986. Justin is born. We are privileged to see you. What joy, what mixed pain feelings to have to go -- but your happy faces will stay in my heart forever.

1987. Pesach. We are invited to share the seder by the family of a professor from a conservative synagogue. 1987. High Holidays - Eilat. Dad is asked to organize services by the conservative movement -- they loved him.

1988. Pesach. We attend seder in the Big Synagogue of Jerusalem. We miss you --

